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ABSTRACT

An audio stimulus activity involves listening to a taped narrative and then responding to several questions. Narratives can be tailored to accommodate their varied audiences, since audiences are more "tuned in" when they are participating in activities to which they can relate. As a group project, students in a listening course at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse have devised narratives related to their intended professions. The task involved creating and scripting a situation, developing questions to ask following the playing of the narrative, and recording the narrative. Such a project could be used by any middle, secondary, university, or technical college instructor, or by a seminar facilitator. The activity would permit students to: (1) work creatively and cooperatively; (2) develop practice in writing; (3) gain an outlet for oral communication practice with the recording phase; (4) develop sensible questions to ask that address the narrative; and (5) provide further practice in presentational skills. (An audio narrative script and its questions, completed during the course, are attached.) (PRA)

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Tom E. Wirkus

Central States Communication Association
Palmer House, Chicago, April 11, 1991

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Tom E. Wirkus

Central States Communication Association
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"An Audio-Stimulus Activity that the Teacher (and perhaps the students) Can Create"

About ten years ago I attended a CSCA convention here in Chicago in which a program on listening featured what Tel-Star, Inc. of St. Paul, Minnesota, was developing for use in schools and industry. One of the exercises, using a business setting, was "The Plant Visitor." Following the listening of the tape, audience members responded to ten questions--some of which required making inferences. A year or two later I attended a Listening short course at an SCA convention and participated in an oral stimulus exercise that was used in organizational structures and was presented by George Tuttle of Illinois State University, Normal, and Johnny Murdock, then the assistant fire marshall for the state of Illinois. The narrative was labeled a "mini-script" and participants were asked to respond to five questions after listening to the message.

I have used these scripts and others in conjunction with listening seminars/workshops and in my two-credit Listening course at UW-La Crosse. A few years ago I began to develop "tailored" audio stimulus activities to accommodate more effectively the varied audiences. For example, when I taught a Listening course for noncommissioned officers at Fort McCoy, near Sparta, Wisconsin, I devised a narrative and follow-up questions that simulated a military office scene. More recently, when working with a group of Head Start teachers, I developed a narrative and a set of questions that focused on a school scene. Obviously, audiences are much more "tuned in" when they can participate in an activity to which they can relate.

The past five years I have taught a listening course at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. As a group project, the class has been divided into groups of 3-7 (students grouped according to major or common interest) and each group has been instructed to devise a narrative related to their inteneded profession/occupation. The task has involved creating and scripting the situation, developing questions to ask following the playing of the narrative, and recording the narrative--using whatever voices and sound/music effects that might enhance the reality of the situation.

Such a project, it seems to me, could be utilized by any middle, secondary, university, or technical college instructor or by a seminar facilitator. Teachers could encourage students to select situations to which the class could relate (a classroom situation, a pep assembly, a social gathering place in school or in the community, etc.). This activity would permit students to:

1. Work creatively and cooperatively in a group setting (especially in a day when cooperative learning groups have come into greater popularity);

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2. Develop practice in writing with some attention being paid to word choice and punctuation;

3. Gain an outlet for oral communication practice with the recording phase (determining appropriate voices, selecting sound effects, music, etc.);

4. Develop sensible questions to ask that address the narrative; and

5. Provide further practice in presentational skills by means of the final explanation/presentation of the project to peers and to the classroom teacher.

Each of these objectives or benefits relate to communication goals that English, Language Arts, or Speech Communication teachers desire to instill in their students. And this activity can also prove to students that learning can be fun!

Today I want to share with you what I thought was one of the best group projects that were submitted during the past year from my listening course. I'll provide you with a response sheet, invite you to listen to the audio taped narrative, and then ask you to answer the questions. We'll then check ourselves to see how effective we were in listening to details.

Play AUDIO TAPE ("Paul's Pizza Parlor")

NOTE: There may be a word or two in the script that you would alter, depending on the age of the students (if students are the audience).

Copies of the narrative and the answer sheets are available at the close of our session today.

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(TEW)

LISTENING
Audio Stimulus Activity
P I Z Z A P A R L O R

[Phone rings]

PATTY: Paul Patterson's Piping Pizza, Patty speaking. May I help you?

CALLER: Is this Paul's Pizza?

PATTY: Yes, may I help you?

CALLER: Can we order a pizza?

PATTY: Sure, what size would you like?

CALLER: Uh, 16 inch.

PATTY: I'm sorry, what was that?

CALLER: 16 inch.

PATTY: O.K., and what would you like on that?

WORKER: Hey, Patty, when you're done with that order, why don't you get us a couple of beers from the walk-in?

CALLER: Pepperoni, sausage, and mushrooms.

PATTY: O.K., what's your address?

CALLER: 925 Pine.

PATTY: O.K., your phone number, please.

CALLER: 784-2118.

PATTY: O.K., your total is $9.35, and it should be there in about 30 minutes.

CALLER: That's apartment 3.

DELIVERER: Look at those legs!

PATTY: Thank you, call again.

WORKER: Yeah, too bad it can't be spring all year round. I love to see all those long legs walk by.

PATTY: You guys have a pizza to make!

DELIVERER: Hey, where's our beer?

PATTY: Just a minute; I'm gettin' it. By the way, when's that--uh--pepperoni, ping-pong picnic supposed to be? Is that Thursday after classes?

LISTENING--Audio Stimulus Activity

PIZZA PARLOR

1. What was the pizza girl's name?

   a. Paula
   b. Pam
   c. Patty
   d. Polly

2. What size pizza was ordered?

   a. 10 inch
   b. 12 inch
   c. 14 inch
   d. 16 inch

3. On what street did she live?

   a. Vine
   b. State
   c. Pine
   d. 16th

4. What was the cost of the pizza?

   a. $9.00
   b. $9.35
   c. $10.00
   d. $9.99

5. What is her apartment number?

   a. 1
   b. 2
   c. 3
   d. 4

6. What is the season of the year?

   a. winter
   b. spring
   c. summer
   d. fall

7. When is the picnic for the workers to be held?

   a. Monday
   b. Thursday
   c. Tuesday
   d. Friday after classes

8. On what street will the picnic be held?

   a. North Avenue
   b. North Street
   c. North Drive
   d. East Avenue

Pizza Parlor (cont.)

9. What is the name of the cook's girl friend?

   a. Jenny
   b. Jan
   c. Julie
   d. Paula

10. Where downtown was the cook partying?

   a. Sidekicks
   b. Yesterdays
   c. Cornerstone
   d. Red Lantern

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